

## **Using Social Media to Enhance Second Language Learning**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to explore whether using social media could be used to enhance the language learning of non-native English students in Lebanese schools to bridge the gap between modern education and technology. It also acknowledged and explored the concerns related to the pedagogical implementation of social media in the second language classroom. A qualitative case study was employed to gather data from a sample of 149 Lebanese students from three schools across Lebanon, alongside seven English teachers. Data were collected from students through two questionnaires and a social media-based activity sheet, and from teachers through semi-structured interviews. Results revealed that enhancing language can be facilitated by challenging English sub-skills through social media, while the pedagogical implementation of social media was met with an overwhelmingly positive response from both students and teachers. Results suggested that there are valid concerns with the pedagogical implementation of social media. Given that this study is among the first to explore the connection between social media and education in Lebanon, further research at a larger scale is recommended.

*Keywords:* Social media; Second language acquisition; Facilitation; Pedagogical approaches; Lebanon

### **Research background**

While social media and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are not directly related, the role that social media plays in today's world suggests that by encouraging and utilizing social media resources in an educational context, we can transform modern teaching and learning (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). However, reaping the benefits of social media for the advancement of education as a whole seems to be something completely neglected in Lebanon, where a huge influx of users on social media is apparent by the plethora of comments on Twitter, albeit in Arabic, as reactions to live television shows or sarcastic quips on political events in the country.

Social media and social networking have become part of learners' daily language and practices. McLoughlin and Lee (2010) refer to social media as a set of web-based tools or services that have a plethora of uses that "build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61), in turn facilitating the sharing of both media and information, while providing opportunities for collaboration and participation. 'Web 2.0' describes "information technology that permits users to be active creators and sharers of online information, rather than simply absorbers of information" (Gurcan, 2015, p. 965). This definition of Web 2.0 aligns with that of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who describe it as a platform where content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals but are continuously modified by users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (p. 61). Tools and applications under the broad heading of Web 2.0 allow users to communicate and collaborate in specific, dedicated communities while allowing them to chat, post blogs, play games, and share media files.

Using social media is "not meant to replace or to fundamentally revolutionize the traditional learning process" (Platon et al. , 2018), yet traditional pedagogical approaches do not suit modern learners (Alfaki & Alharthy, 2014). However, with the excessive use of technology by youth for fun activities and communication with others, educators need to find ways for moving learners away from their phones and tablets to engage in the teaching and learning process planned by schools and universities; or better still, use those tools in teaching. However, some may argue that teachers are often not as skilled as learners in using technology in teaching, and some may not be willing to do that either. Also, with technology and internet use in teaching, content, interaction, and discussions are no longer controlled and protected. Privacy also becomes a bigger problem as it inadvertently associates itself with classroom dynamics, "For good classroom dynamics, teachers foster and encourage an environment of trust, but now we also need to instill a respect for other-people-privacy on social networking sites" (Blyth, 2015, p. 171). Given that "social media tools are mostly free applications for public use" (Liu, 2010, p. 107), they open the door for more concerns. Gurcan (2015) delves deeper into these potential concerns, presenting language-related issues such as profanity, vulgarity, obscenities, and language that is harassing and derogatory as being completely unacceptable in a school environment. It is the responsibility of the educator to become versed in these platforms before using them in a classroom setting while ensuring students' best interests by protecting the learning environment (Liu, 2010). Even if learners are not exposed to the more harmful side of the Internet, basic mobile phone use itself could impede learning. Alshabeb and Almaqrn (2018) claim that the use of social media in English classes may be a waste of time if students use these applications to chat. However, Dehghan et al. (2017) recommend that learners need to be directed to desired objectives through controlling social applications and access to sites. They suggest that students must "become aware of the pedagogical value of the social network being utilized" (p. 7) to accept them as learning devices and not just tools for fun and entertainment. This can make it "possible to use these online tools to improve students' English ability" (Chartrand, 2012, p. 100).

### **Research Purpose**

Consequently, our study investigates teachers and learners' perceptions of whether social

media can enhance language while exploring the factors that could be of concern to both during the implementation of social media as a pedagogical tool: How can social media resources be used in SLA and what are teachers' and learners' perceptions of using social media in an English as a Second Language setting?

The study can increase teachers' awareness of the new ways in which learning can happen inside and outside the class, and of possibilities for using current technology tools and platforms in teaching and learning. It also creates awareness that popular technology resources can be instrumental in enhancing learners' language skills. The study examines perceptions of both parties of using social media in learning a second language to close the gap between what teachers and learners see as engaging learning.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks guide this study in the choice of design and discussion of findings: Krashen's input hypothesis, social constructivist theories, and theories of motivation.

Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis is potentially considered "the single most important concept in SLA theory today" (p. 9). According to Krashen (1981), "language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages" (p. 1), and needs meaningful, natural interaction and communication in the target language, with a focus on understanding and conveying messages. Not limited to just SLA, Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory implies that while language acquisition does not happen overnight, it does not have to be based around the extensive use of grammatical rules, nor does it require constant drill and practice. Instead, pedagogical techniques that provide language learners with 'comprehensive input' in a low anxiety context that is uninterested in forcing and correcting production will most likely yield positive results.

The social constructivist approach supports our study as well. It implies that learning is enhanced when course material is made relevant to learners' lived experiences and when they interact with peers and learn from their logic, and the self-determination theory helps us understand how empowered learners become motivated to learn when provided with tools to improve their competence, connect with others, and become independent.

## **Literature Review**

Learners benefit from collaborative learning and low anxiety learning environment when using social media in language learning, as studies indicate. Quantitative and qualitative approaches as well as case studies and narratives to draw out diverse views have been used and recommended (Yang, 2011), in addition to longitudinal studies aimed at understanding the long-term impact of this technology (Sun & Chang, 2012), and for measuring language development in all language skills of learners who engaged in this technology (Lin et al., 2016). The literature presented recommendations for teachers to familiarize learners with the pedagogical usefulness of social media (Yang, 2011), and of web technology in enhancing writing skills (Sun & Chang, 2012), and to rethink the

usefulness of Web technology in language teaching, namely writing for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Sun & Chang, 2012). Other suggestions were for teachers to benefit from the potential of technology by preparing for the learners' collaborative writing tasks, implementing, then having students reflect on the experience (Bikowski & Vithanage, 2016). Nevertheless, well-structured activities are needed to support learners in online language learning (Lin et al., 2016).

### *Using social media in language learning*

Some frameworks for users of technology were presented in the literature. For example, in a meta-analysis of the literature on e-learning, Ali et al. (2018) categorized barriers in using technology in teaching and learning as issues related to "technology, the individual, the pedagogy, and enabling conditions." This conceptual framework serves as a guide for educators and others in their work with e-learning pedagogies. Another relevant framework for e-learning is Aparicio et al.'s (2016) that included teachers and learners, learning strategies, and technologies. Therefore, the interaction between the learner, the tools, and the pedagogy is key in using technology in teaching and learning.

Moreover, using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) helps teachers of L2 cater to learners' individual needs and scaffolding them to the next level (Teo & Williams, 2005). ICT can also promote independent learning. In Snow's (2015) theoretical model of effective teaching and learning, she presents self-regulated learning as conducive to learners' achievement starting with setting a purpose, learning and implementing relevant strategies, managing learning time, engaging in collaborative learning, asking for help when needed, eliminating distractors, and monitoring performance to adjust goals.

Other studies in a Western context encourage the use of social media for the ease it provides, even when compared to other technological advances, and for how learners found it much more convenient, for example, to post comments to Twitter immediately on their mobile phones than having to constantly log in and out of a "password-protected course discussion board that students could not access from their mobile device," and share thoughts immediately with their classmates (Gikas & Grant, 2013, p. 22).

Studies that explored blogging in teaching English language writing included collaboration as an added value. Yang (2011), Sun and Chang (2012), Vurdien (2013) and Bikowski and Vithanage (2016) examined the effect of web-based collaboration on writing tasks: Yang (2011) conducted an online exchange project through blogging in English, Sun and Chang (2012) used blogs to enhance learners' academic writing, Yim and Warschauer (2017) engaged L2 learners in collaborative writing through online platforms such as wikis and blogs, and Vurdien (2013) used task-based writing on learners' blogs. Positive gains were noted in learners' sense of community and effort as they worked on the improvement of meaning and word choice.

One may conclude that social networks foster interaction and language learning among users. Srivastava (2012) maintains that online platforms that focus on facilitating the building of relations between people with shared interests, backgrounds, or real-life connections provide opportunities for web-based interaction. The implementation of social media resources as pedagogical tools affects SLA positively.

Another positive effect is creating a suitable mood for learning and reducing anxiety. Benati and Angelovska (2016) noted that interaction through conversation makes

“linguistic features salient to learners” (p. 141) thus increasing the rate of acquisition. Muho and Kurani’s (2011) study found that interaction promotes SLA, with a link found between interaction and learning through three major components of interaction: input, output, and feedback. Output’s role in SLA when associated with social media is just as pivotal as the role of input. Swain (2000) states that output “pushes learners to process language more deeply” (p. 99) as it gives them the power of control. It works hand in hand with creating meaning, so learners “can ‘stretch’ their interlanguage to meet communicative goals” (p. 99), while discovering what they can or cannot do, whether related to speaking or writing. ‘Noticing’ is another aspect of SLA promoted through output. Swain’s (2000) study implies that in certain cases, learners may notice their difficulty in knowing how to precisely express the meanings they wish to convey at the time they wish to produce it. This aspect of language production relies on learners’ attention to what they do or do not know, and their attempts to correct them, which once again stresses the importance of output in SLA.

However, language production may cause anxiety to many language learners and may limit interaction. The anonymity brought about by a lack of face-to-face interaction was found to play a positive part in student engagement. Alfaki and Alharthy (2014) state that the fear of making mistakes and the general tension brought about by classroom activities are not present over social networks. This is also apparent in Chawinga’s (2017) study who noted that the lack of face-to-face interaction between students using Twitter ultimately increased student participation. While an open-ended question asked in class would be sometimes met with complete silence, the same question asked over Twitter would get a remarkable response rate.

### **Perceptions of using social media in language learning**

From a student perspective

As a by-product, student engagement and building relationships between peers and instructors are positively correlated with the use of social media, as perceived by students themselves, while also factoring in how they positively describe their overall learning experience (Rutherford, 2010), a sign that “it is possible that faculty and administrators could develop educational practices that include using Facebook in ways that maximize both engagement and academic benefits” (Junco, 2011, p. 169). This correlates with findings by Bosch (2009) who revealed that since students were already spending a significant amount of time on Facebook, being able to check class-related material while engaging in personal interaction with their peers was to their benefit. Participants in Ozdemir’s (2017) study had also perceived using Facebook in their EFL class as positive for developing their communication skills.

Faizi et al.’s (2014) analysis revealed that all surveyed students reported to be active on at least one social network, i.e., Facebook; 81% of these students use social media resources to enhance their foreign language skills, with 80% of them being interested in learning and improving their English language. In another study (Tunde-Awe, 2015) participants agreed that Facebook serves as a suitable environment to enhance student communication skills and confidence when reading and writing. These results correlate with findings by Alsaied (2017) that show that among 283 female undergraduate students at a university in Saudi Arabia, 76% liked to use social media for education. Similarly, Monica-

Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014) reported that “students improved in vocabulary performance and confidence after being exposed to vocabulary via Facebook as compared to the case of students benefitting from traditional instruction only” (p. 128). Of 900 participants involved in an experimental case study conducted in Malaysia, Faryadi (2017) found that the control group (those who used Facebook) outperformed students who were not exposed to Facebook in post-tests. She concluded that Facebook helps in improving English proficiency and the learning of new vocabulary words and terminology.

Moreover, Faizi et al. (2014) noted that the majority of the students they surveyed opted to use social networking and video sharing sites over social online communities dedicated to language learning. Roebuck et al. (2013) had found similar results, reporting that image/video resources were the most widely used as pedagogical tools, “followed by collaborative authoring tools for sharing and editing documents” (p. 176). Communication, content delivery, interaction, and collaboration were reported to be the most important functions of these tools. So using Facebook and other online networks could enhance language learning. Felea and Stanca (2015) observed that Facebook ultimately changed student and teacher roles in a classroom context. Students began to become independent individuals with increased collaborative skills, while teachers assumed the role of facilitators, offering support and guidance. Montrieux et al.’s (2015) study on the integration of tablets in an educational setting yielded similar results, noting that online networks and discussion groups were established through applications such as Facebook and iMessage. These networks increased both the rate at which students shared information and students’ inclination to collaborate. Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012) found that interaction, communication, and social connectivity were the dominant themes concerned with the social nature of learning experiences, specifically highlighting peer collaboration and support. In terms of writing in particular, posting on Facebook in target languages has been found to have an overall impact on language learning.

#### From an educator’s perspective

The relationship between social media and SLA is not limited to just students. Güleç and Güleç (2017) found that 76% of 40 academic staff from seven universities in Turkey believed that the implementation of social media in language classrooms affected lectures positively and that 93% of their students believed that social media was playing a positive role in the lectures. The main motives behind this academic staff’s use of social media were “self-improving, catching-up with technology and engaging more students” (p. 274), highlighting an interesting point that social media can also be tied to language professional development.

Alhamami (2013) presents social media as a community for language teachers, claiming that “the difference between social media as professional development tools and other professional development tools is that social media gives the teachers a community to participate with” (p. 187); a space to stay connected with peers around the world, the ability to stay updated with the latest trends in language learning, and a chance to help others in the field while collaboratively solving problems. Mazer et al. (2007) claim that a teacher’s mere presence on Facebook may positively affect students’ outcomes simply through a perceived attempt to build healthy relationships. Ventura and Quero (2013) found that Facebook had positive effects regarding university teaching, facilitating teacher resources,

having students respond positively to the material used, and encouraging students to contribute new digital resources. This ultimately enhanced group interaction. Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014) similarly found teachers communicating with students about target topics over Facebook made their vocabulary instruction more appealing to students, thus increasing motivation to improve their English. Moreover, the diverse range of available social media applications allows teachers to cater to their learners' learning styles by mixing and matching said applications as seen fit to achieve academic success.

## **Methodology**

We opted for a qualitative case study of the phenomenon of using social media in SLA. This approach allows participants who are closest to the issue being investigated to express their views and perceptions thus giving the researchers an inside look at what is being studied. Evidence is in the form of perceptions and not statistical evidence of impact (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2003).

Participants included seven English language teachers, teaching eighth, tenth and eleventh grades, and 149 students in 7 separate classes from 3 schools across Lebanon; 22 from eighth grade, 62 from tenth grade, and 65 from eleventh grade.

Through the International Research Board (IRB) Ethical procedures, we ensured the consent of parents and teachers and informed all participants that identity and data are confidential and that participation is voluntary and can end when they wish. We contacted schools across Lebanon, through email, and by phone. The nature of the study was described in detail, and the three schools interested in partaking in the study were sent copies of the instruments. Parents' and teachers' consent was secured.

## **Data Collection**

Two questionnaires and an activity sheet were administered to the students, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers. We constructed the instruments in line with the study purpose and reviewed literature. They were piloted on non-participating individuals to enhance validity.

### ***Questionnaires***

The first questionnaire aimed to collect data on whether students are active on social media and how much time they engage with it, if they use social media for any educational purposes, whether they would be interested in using social media educationally, and what their concerns would be while doing so.

A second questionnaire was distributed a week after students completed an activity sheet related to the educational use of social media. It aimed at exploring students' experiences with social media as a learning tool; gathering an overall impression of learners' experiences and focusing on how they perceived the effect of specific activities on their language learning; and exploring whether students would be interested in moving forward with such pedagogical approaches.

### ***Activity sheet***

A guide was prepared to facilitate for students the signing up processes on Twitter and Instagram as a preliminary and precautionary step. The guide included step-by-step instructions on how to sign up on these platforms, instructions for students to share their accounts with their peers and teachers, and a note for students to post a specific set of hashtags along with their tweets/posts.

A template for the activity sheet was prepared to entail social media as a pedagogical tool. Activities on paraphrasing, summarizing, article writing, creative writing, and learning vocabulary using social media allowed students to approach these sub-skills differently.

The readings chosen for the paraphrasing and summarizing exercises were suitable for the entire sample. To be as authentic as possible, other exercises that called for examples of social media were pulled from social media platforms directly. Both screenshots of a tweet and an Instagram post were incorporated into the activity sheet directly, with careful consideration for choosing content suitable to the students' grade levels. The use of the desktop computer view of both Twitter and Instagram over their mobile-centric alternatives was a deliberate choice, with the clarity and formatting of the desktop versions simply complementing the activity sheet better. With all the instances of gathered resources from the Internet, credit was given to the owners of the content.

The activity sheet template was provided to the English teachers ahead of time to incorporate subject matter, themes, and aspects relevant to their current lesson plans. Teachers did not modify it. All students were given 45 minutes of their own class time to complete the activity (see Appendix: The activity sheet).

To enhance the credibility of the instruments we derived the questions from concepts in the research questions and the reviewed literature then we piloted on two students who are not participating in our study. No major editing was required.

### ***Interviews***

The interviews with the English language teachers aimed to obtain specific information guided by the list of issues that need exploring. Four of the interviews were carried out face-to-face, with audio recorded on a mobile phone. The remaining three interviews took place over WhatsApp voice messages. All 7 interviews were first transferred to a laptop, listened to closely, and then transcribed into a word processing document.

### ***Data analysis***

The data collected were in two forms: Transcribed interviews with teachers and data generated from the questionnaires. The data were split and organized according to information obtained from teachers and information obtained from students and analyzed accordingly. Common themes, categories, and patterns were noted, and in the case of the questionnaires, several instances of pre-activity sheet and post-activity sheet results were noted for comparison. Given that this study is a case study, qualitative in nature, we were interested in the perceptions and narrative yielded from the instruments; we were not



concerned with approaching said results under a quantitative lens.

### *Data from questionnaires*

All but one student claimed they owned a mobile phone. 97.99% said they were active on social media platforms.

Table 1 shows which social media platforms the students actively use and provides a general outlook on the popularity of these platforms from a student perspective.

**Table 1**

#### *Activity on social media platforms*

	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	10 <sup>th</sup> grade	11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Total
Facebook	9.7%	23.3%	19.2%	52%
Twitter	3.4%	3.4%	5.5%	12.3%
Instagram	11%	35%	40%	86%
WhatsApp	11.6%	35.6%	43.1%	90.4%
Snapchat	2%	5.5%	3.4%	11%
YouTube	3.4%	11.6%	5.5%	20.5%
Pinterest	0.1%	2%	0.1%	3.4%

A considerable amount of time is spent on daily social media usage: 81.5% of the students claimed they used social media a lot of time. Only 7.5% of students claimed to use social media for a few minutes a day, while 11% said they only used social media in response to notifications they received.

A majority of 73.2% claimed to use social media educationally for homework, 61.6% stated they partake in group work over social media, while 38.4% said to use it to complain about school-related issues.

Half (51.7%) were sure that social media could play a positive role in their education, 45% believed it could benefit their education, while 3.4% did not think so, whatsoever. In addition, 58.4% clearly stated they were interested in trying out social media-based activities in their classes, while 4.7% said they were not interested. The remaining 37% stated they were indifferent to the matter.

Some (35.6%) students claimed that they would have certain concerns using social media in their classrooms, while the remaining 64.4% would be willing to use it. Those who claimed they would have concerns using social media in their classes were then presented with hypothetical issues that might be problematic for them. Their responses were as follows: 24.2% worried about a lack of privacy and cyber-bullying and worried that the experience was wasting their time. Again, the number of respondents who worry about privacy and safety is not surprising. There is some awareness of risks in using social media.

The vast majority of participants own a mobile phone and are also active on social media. WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook were found to be the dominant social media platforms amongst these participants, while their interest in other platforms (notably Twitter) pales in comparison. The majority of students claimed the amount of time spent daily on social media included using it for both homework and group work. Only 3.4% believed social media could not impact their education positively before taking part in the study, but most were interested in seeing how the implementation of social media

pedagogically would play out.

### **Common themes, categories, and patterns found in teacher interviews**

Analysis of the transcribed interviews with the 7 teachers produced the following results.

#### **Reasons to change pedagogical practices**

While all the teachers have had to change their pedagogical practices over the years, the reasons for these necessary changes were attributed to different factors: 42.99% stated student disengagement as a reason, 28.6% mentioned catering to different learning styles, and 28.6% indirectly described self-growth as the motive behind the change. Only 14.3% chose to change their pedagogical approaches to increase motivation, and 14.3% mentioned the need to integrate more concept-based strategies over content-based ones. It is interesting to note that teachers were aware of the importance of engaging students by trying different teaching methods to increase their motivation to learn. Most (71.4%) said they can use technology, but only 28.6% had to use it in an educational setting compared to 28.6% who actively use social media outside of an educational setting. All teachers stated that they use it with students for educational purposes.

All the teachers claimed they use WhatsApp purely for communicative reasons. Most were active on Facebook (71.4%), whereas Instagram is used by only 42.9%. None of the teachers used Twitter.

While none of the teachers disliked the idea of using social media as a pedagogical tool, 42.9% explained that while they may have eventually warmed up to the idea, they were hesitant at first. Another 42.9% claimed they liked the idea immediately, and the remaining 14.3% were more interested in students' reactions rather than their own.

Having given their students a week to contemplate whether or not they enjoyed the experience of using social media in their classes, 85.8% noted that their students were enthusiastic initially, while 14.3% claimed that "if [the students] were forced to use [social media] academically then they would just stop using social media altogether." Despite the initial enthusiasm noted, all believed their students were not motivated to join any new social media platforms once the experience was over. Teachers' data results reflect their negative perception of their students' willingness to use and enjoy social media tools for educational purposes.

Most teachers (71.4%) stated they would like to implement such activities on their own, but 28.6% left it to their school's administration to decide; 14.3% were undecided, and 14.3% were not interested in implementing social media educationally in the current state it is in.

The time needed for implementation, cyber-bullying and a lack of privacy were issues for 28.6%. Few (14.3%) mentioned the cost of implementation such as Internet cost, being problematic; few (14.3%) mentioned the lack of a controlled environment as a concern, while 14.3% remarked that the curriculum's rigid structure and lack of flexibility would be a point of contention.

To enhance the reliability of results, the common factors between the 2 sets of results from the interviews and questionnaires were highlighted to provide an underlying understanding of how social media could function as a pedagogical tool, whether there is

a general interest in seeing the concept developed further and what overall concerns could impede the development of a pedagogically-charged use of social media. By comparing the 2 sets of results, we can deduce that social media and technology already play a pivotal role in the lives of both educators and students, with both parties mostly active on the same platforms. Teachers and students both reacted to the proposed approach with an initial reserved attraction toward it, and both parties ultimately left the study with a similar interest in seeing the concept developed and utilized further. Finally, the causes for concern, too, were shared between teachers and students. A lack of privacy was deemed to be the biggest concern amongst teachers and students, but there is a desire to see the pedagogical implementation of social media comes to fruition.

## **Discussion of findings**

### **The positive role of social media in SLA and overall reactions**

To elicit a direct response to the first research question, students who participated in this study completed an activity sheet that included several social media-based exercises related to English language sub-skills. After completing the activity sheet, students were given a questionnaire aimed at making sense of their experiences with the activity sheet. In every instance, whether related to Twitter or Instagram, most students found their interaction with social media to play a positive role in certain sub-skills. 77.2% believed that paraphrasing and summarizing were made easier through the use of Twitter's character limit, while even more students perceived their interacting with tweets assisted in vocabulary learning. Our results that exposure to vocabulary on social sites can improve vocabulary performance when compared to traditional instruction concur with Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela's (2014) results that focused on using Facebook as a pedagogical tool. Some experimental studies (Indari & Putri, 2018) had found a significant effect of social media on vocabulary learning. While many of the participating learners were unsure if Instagram's implementation as a learning tool was as effective as Twitter, more than half of these found Instagram fosters creativity in terms of writing.

These findings also align with those found by Faizi et al. (2014), Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014) and Faryadi (2017), and suggest that not only does social media have educational properties that can be used to make language learning easier, but that students respond well to them as learning tools. This is only heightened by results procured from both students and teachers regarding how they responded to the entire experience. A considerable spike in positive responses can be seen in terms of both an interest in more implementation of social media practices and overall opinion on whether social media could benefit education. More so, only 14.3% claimed they had no interest in using social media pedagogically, implying that the remaining teachers have found educational benefits in social media.

### **Concerns with using social media in classrooms**

Combining the results attained from students and teachers reveals that a lack of privacy is the main concern related to the pedagogical use of social media. While over half of the participating learners revealed that any concerns they had in using social media

in their classes were no longer valid after participating in this study, the majority of students who still had concerns attributed them to the factors related to privacy explored by Blyth (2015). Interestingly, as a counter-argument to Blyth's findings, privacy-related issues do not appear to be a concern for most of the teachers interviewed; 28.6% argued that privacy should not even be considered a cause for concern, as their perceptions lead them to believe that their students do not care about their privacy. The discrepancy between results certainly raises questions about how well teachers know their students.

Cyber-bullying and a waste of time were chosen as concerns by an equal number of students, supporting the claims of Alshabeb and Almaqrn (2018) and Gurcan (2015), while 28.6% explained that cyber-bullying is a modern epidemic, a true reason for concern and a factor that needs to be thought about carefully before trying to use social media pedagogically. While Chartrand (2012) suggested that the cost of implementing social media in classrooms was a dwindling concern, 14.3% agreed with his statement. Agreeing with Rodriguez (2011) and Dehghan et al. (2017), 14.3% had issues with the lack of a controlled environment that comes about with the advent of social media-based practices.

Overall, although the largest number of participants left this study having no concerns, the combination of students with concerns, those that left the study feeling uncomfortable, and the concerned teachers is too large to suggest that the implementation of social media pedagogically is fool-proof, and those concerns need to be addressed moving forward.

### **Educational uses of social media and activity on platforms**

For both teachers and students, WhatsApp and Instagram were found to be the dominant social media platforms of choice, with WhatsApp being used by the majority of the participants for communicative and collaborative purposes. The bulk of the students, who claimed they used social media for educational purposes, stated they used it for homework and to partake in group work. These findings correlate with those of Faizi et al. (2014) and Roebuck et al. (2013) who stated that social networking sites and media sharing sites' properties to facilitate communication, content delivery, interaction, and collaboration made them the most popular choices. Though YouTube was not present on the questionnaire, it was listed by 20.5%. While Facebook's presence was more pronounced in the literature reviewed (Bosch, 2009; Junco, 2011; Faizi et al., 2014; Monica-Ariana & Anamaria-Mirabela, 2014; Felea & Stanca, 2015; Tunde-Awe, 2015; Faryadi, 2017), it also maintained a presence in this study, with almost 50% stating they are active on it, alongside 71.4% of the teachers. This could be attributed to its potential in affecting students' inclination to collaborate (Montrieux et al., 2015). Following YouTube are Twitter, Snapchat, and Pinterest (in that order) with almost insignificant results, especially in comparison to WhatsApp and Instagram, results that are almost mirrored through the teacher interviews.

Twitter's popularity or lack thereof, is one of the most interesting discoveries obtained through this study. Its presence is next to nothing in terms of students and nothing in terms of teachers.

This study did not motivate a single student to join any new social media platforms. This result is reiterated in the transcribed teacher interviews, where, in every instance, teachers reported they had not seen any changes from their students. Several teachers attributed that to the fact that is new to the students, Twitter had possibly taken on a purely

educational form to them, an implication that directly contradicts the suggestion by Dehghan et al. (2017) who recommend that students need to be aware of the pedagogical value of the platforms they are using. More so, one teacher suggested that had students been granted the chance to use their phones in class, things might have been different and they would have been persuaded in joining new platforms immediately.

## **Conclusion**

Social media can facilitate SLA with both students and teachers have shown interest in it being used more in classrooms. Numerous concerns need to be addressed before social media can be considered a true pedagogical tool. Communication and collaboration are currently the main uses of social media among Lebanese students and teachers with WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook considered the most popular social media platforms.

Technology has its place in education, but as technology continues to evolve, so must its educational function. While tried and true formulae continue to work inside classrooms, technological pedagogical approaches employed need to be challenged. Despite its sudden rise and undeniable popularity in today's modern world, social media has secured a place in the lives of most people across the globe. That alone should be a reason to motivate educators into exploring its pedagogical properties and work side-by-side with current technological approaches.

Social media encompasses communication not only through the exchange of media but through words as well. Its educational properties, coupled with humanity's current extensive utilization of mobile phones and social media platforms could be a focal point in changing the landscape of modern education. While still acknowledging that the use of social media pedagogically is risky and exploring the reasons for concern of its implementation, this study dared to investigate the positive role social media could play on our youth's ability to acquire and enhance learning another language. Through an overwhelmingly positive response from both educators and students toward the implementation of social media pedagogically, a clear interest shown in seeing the concept developed and utilized further, and the challenging of sub-skills through social media met favorably, this study can conclude that, with proper consideration and implementation, social media can positively affect SLA.

## **Limitations**

While the study was targeted at eighth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade students, the initial assumption was that we would be able to access 3 sections from each of the grade levels. Unfortunately, the nature of the study and time constraints played too large a role, and schools backed out. The sample of students we ultimately obtained sufficed, but having fewer classes meant having less access to teachers. Furthermore, none of the participating teachers chose to convert the sample activity sheet into one that was relevant to the material they were covering in class. While they took the study extremely seriously and thus it did not suffer in any way as a result, a more personalized, authentic experience for teachers and students may have affected results differently. Another limitation was schools' refusal to allow their students to access their mobile phones while participating in this

study. Teachers were given access to a single Twitter account displayed in class. so, instead of typing tweets into their phones and adjusting them accordingly, students were relegated into having to compose their tweets entirely on paper while constantly counting how many characters they were using. One more limitation is related to students' responses to the questionnaires since self-reporting may not always reflect the truth.

### Suggestions for further research

A study on social media and education deserves a much larger sample, especially in terms of teachers, so key areas related to social media and education could need exploration. The first is related to Twitter directly, delving deeper into the underlying reasons that make Twitter the least popular social media platform by far for both teachers and students in this context. The second topic is whether there is truly a place for mobile phones and social media in both current and future classrooms while taking into consideration the pedagogical advantages and disadvantages of a mobile-inclusive world of education.

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## Appendix

### Student Activity Template

1. Twitter gives you a maximum of 280 characters to use in a single post. The following article is obviously longer than that. Suppose you wanted to post the information from the article in a single tweet, but were limited by the maximum character count. In the space on the next page, summarize the article in 280 characters while retaining the gist (its general meaning) and include all the points you feel are essential to the article. Keep in mind that proper spelling and sentence structure is necessary.
  
2. Exercise 1 was a workout, right? That said, you're feeling extra adventurous today and just found out that prior to November 2017, Twitter actually had a 140 character limit. Crazy, huh? For the following article, summarize the content of the article into 140 characters so that its gist is the focal point of your tweet. Don't worry, this time 'round you're free to use internet lingo and abbreviations. Also, feel free to skip out on any words you don't feel need to be in your tweet.

1. Take a look at the following tweet by CNN:

While you've gotten used to paraphrasing, summarizing and condensing information into tweets, let's see if you can do the opposite. The above tweet by CNN has information distilled to its very core. However, that information has a very clear context. In 250 to 400 words, expand that tweet (using both information you already know about Saudi history and any online resources) into the full-length article you think you would find hyperlinked (in blue) at the end of that tweet.

2. Take a look at the following list of vocabulary words:

COMPLACENCY HYPOCRISY COARSE LUMBER PEDDLER

You're already logged into your Twitter account, aren't you? See that Search Twitter space near your account information at the top-right corner of the screen? If you search for the words above on Twitter, you'll get a list of tweets that contain those words. By skimming through the various tweets and understanding the context those words are used in, you can deduce their meanings. Give each of the 5 words a broad definition.

3. Look at the following screen capture of a post from lost with purpose's Instagram account:

Come up with 5 unique hashtags that you yourself would have used had you posted the picture above. Write them in the blank rectangle below. What are the common factors that bridge these hashtags? Think of the themes, ideas, colors and mental images that come to you when you think of them. In the space provided below, write a 500 word piece of creative writing (a story, if you will) that is NOT related to the image above, but has its foundations built on what inspired you to create those unique hashtags in the first place.